

Message Text

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NATO CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL FROM WASHINGTON

SUBJECT: POLAND: A HARDER LINE ON DISSIDENTS?
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1. ALTHOUGH THE GIEREK REGIME HAS HAD SOME MODEST SUCCESS
IN OFFSETTING THE ECONOMIC DISSATISFACTION STEMMING FROM
LAST JUNE'S PRICE-RISE FIASCO, IT STILL REMAINS UNDER

CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM A NUMBER OF DISSIDENT INTELLEC-
TUALS. THIS PRESSURE COMES PRIMARILY FROM THE WORKERS'
DEFENSE COMMITTEE (WDC)--AN ORGANIZATION SET UP LAST
SEPTEMBER TO AID WORKERS PUNISHED FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE
RIOTS--AND FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. THE LATEST DEVELOP-
MENTS IN THE TUG OF WAR BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES AND THE

DISSIDENTS INCLUDE:

(A)--PUBLICATION ON DECEMBER 28 OF A WDC APPEAL TO THE SEJM (PARLIAMENT) TO SET UP A SPECIAL COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE LAST SUMMER'S DEMONSTRATIONS AND ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY DURING THEM; AND

(B)--THE REGIME'S JANUARY 15 DECISIONS TO (A) BRING THREE WDC MEMBERS TO TRIAL ON CHARGES OF ILLEGAL COLLECTION OF MONEY TO DEFEND WORKERS AND (B) PROHIBIT WDC SOLICITATION OF MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS.

2. REFLECTING THE WIDENING SUPPORT THAT THE WDC CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN RECEIVING, BY FEBRUARY 17 THE APPEAL HAD ATTRACTED ABOUT 960 SIGNATURES, INCLUDING THOSE OF 34 PROFESSORS, 231 STUDENTS AND WORKERS, 185 CATHOLIC PRIESTS, AND 300 INTELLECTUALS FROM VARIOUS CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC CIRCLES.

3. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE POLISH LEADERSHIP IS IN A QUANDARY AS TO HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THE DISSIDENT CHALLENGE. A CRACKDOWN COULD EITHER PRECIPITATE NEW OUT-BREAKS OF CIVIL DISORDER OR CREATE UNWANTED MARTYRS. IT WAS PROBABLY SUCH CONSIDERATIONS THAT CAUSED THE SUSPENSION ON DECEMBER 30 OF THE JAIL SENTENCES OF SIX WORKERS, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE TOKEN FINES (EQUAL TO ABOUT DOLS 200) GIVEN THE THREE WDC MEMBERS, AND GIEREK'S FEBRUARY 3 RECOMMENDATION FOR A REMISSION OR TERMINATION OF THE RIOTERS' SENTENCES.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, THE REGIME EVIDENTLY FELT FORCED TO ESCALATE THE HARASSMENT OF THE WDC AS AN OBVIOUS WARNING THAT THERE ARE LIMITS TO ITS TOLERANCE. ITS ACTIONS MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN IN RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS REPORTEDLY RECEIVED FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND EAST GERMANY THAT ECHOES OF POLISH DISSIDENCE ARE CAUSING CONCERN FOR THOSE REGIMES.

5. LAUNCHING OF THE WORKERS' DEFENSE COMMITTEE. ALTHOUGH INTELLECTUAL DISSSENT HAS A LONG TRADITION IN POLAND, PRESENT ACTIVITY HAS RESULTED DIRECTLY FROM THE GIEREK REGIME'S ILL-FATED ATTEMPT LAST JUNE 24 TO INTRODUCE

STEEP PRICE RISES ON FOODSTUFFS. IN THE FACE OF STRIKES AND RIOTS BY WORKERS IN SEVERAL MAJOR CITIES, THE REGIME WAS FORCED TO CANCEL THE PRICE HIKES THE NEXT DAY. THE WORKERS WERE APPEASED, BUT THE NATION'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES WERE AGGRAVATED AND PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE LEADERSHIP WAS SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED.

6. THE REGIME'S INITIAL RESPONSE WAS TO DISMISS AND/OR JAIL SOME 300 WORKERS FOR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN THE DIS-

TURBANCES. THIS ACTION, TOGETHER WITH SEVERE FOOD SHORT-AGES AND THE APPARENT WEAKNESS OF THE REGIME, RAISED THE SPECTER OF THE MOST DANGEROUS COALESCENCE OF VARIOUS DISSIDENT ELEMENTS--WORKERS, INTELLECTUALS, STUDENTS, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH--SEEN SINCE 1956.

7. CREATED BY 14 WELL-KNOWN INTELLECTUALS, THE WDC SURFACED PUBLICLY WITH THE ISSUANCE OF AN "APPEAL TO THE NATION AND THE AUTHORITIES OF POLAND" ON SEPTEMBER 23, 1976. (NOTE: SIGNERS OF THE APPEAL INCLUDE WRITERS JERZY ANDRZEJEWSKI, JOZEF LIPSKI, AND STANISLAW BARANCZAK; THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ECONOMIST EDWARD LIPINSKI; LAWYERS AND FORMER SOCIALIST POLITICIANS LUDWIK COHN AND ANTONI PAJDAK; HISTORIAN JACEK KURON; AND THE REVEREND JAN ZIEJKA.) THE COMMITTEE, WHICH HAS SINCE GROWN TO 22 AND REPORTEDLY ENJOYS THE SUPPORT OF SCORES OF SYMPATHIZERS, CHARGED THE AUTHORITIES WITH BREAKING THE LAW IN PROSECUTING WORKERS WHO WERE PUTTING FORTH DEMANDS THAT HAD THE SUPPORT OF SOCIETY AT LARGE. DECLARING THAT PUBLICIZING GOVERNMENT INJUSTICES AND POLICE ABUSES WAS THE ONLY REMAINING WAY TO DEFEND THE WORKERS' INTERESTS, IT CALLED ON THE PUBLIC TO GIVE COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL, FINANCIAL, AND MORAL BACKING TO THE PUNISHED WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

8. COMMUNIQUE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT EMBARRASS REGIME. BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 29 AND DECEMBER 28, THE COMMITTEE RELEASED FIVE "COMMUNIQUE" IN WHICH IT REVEALED HIGHLY EMBARRASSING INFORMATION ABOUT THE JUNE RIOTS. INCLUDED WERE DETAILS OF THE REGIME'S REPRISALS AGAINST THE WORKERS, INCLUDING COMPELLING THEM TO RUN A GAUNTLET BETWEEN LINES OF TRUNCHEON-WIELDING POLICEMEN.

9. PARTICULARLY ANNOYING TO THE REGIME WAS THE WDC'S COLLECTION OF A SUBSTANTIAL SUM OF MONEY (1,066,000 ZLOTIES, APPROXIMATELY DOLS 75,000) FOR LEGAL AND OTHER ASSISTANCE TO WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THE DONATED MONEY CAME BOTH FROM WITHIN POLAND AND FROM POLES ABROAD (ESPECIALLY

IN THE US), INCLUDING SUCH INTERNATIONAL LUMINARIES AS THE NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING NOVELIST HEINRICH BOELL AND SWISS WRITER MAX FRISCH. EXPRESSIONS OF SOLIDARITY ALSO CAME FROM WRITERS SAUL BELLOW, GUENTHER GRASS, EUGENE IONESCU, STEPHEN SPENDER, JEAN-PAUL SARTRE, ITALIAN CP LEADER ENRICO BERLINGUER, AND DISSIDENT SOVIET PHYSICIST ANDREY SAKHAROV.

10. FACED WITH GROWING OPPOSITION AT HOME AND CENSURE CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM ABROAD, AND GIVEN THE PRECARIOUS ECONOMIC SITUATION, THE POLISH AUTHORITIES ATTEMPTED TO DEFUSE THE WDC CAMPAIGN BY SUSPENDING THE SENTENCES OF MOST JAILED WORKERS AND REINSTATING NUMEROUS OTHERS WHO HAD BEEN FIRED FROM THEIR JOBS.

11. CATHOLIC CHURCH JOINS CAMPAIGN. IN LATE NOVEMBER THE POWERFUL CATHOLIC CHURCH ADDED ITS VOICE TO THOSE APPEALING TO THE REGIME TO BE LENIENT WITH THE WORKERS. IT WAS PERHAPS NOT BY COINCIDENCE THAT THE POLISH EPISCOPATE STEPPED IN JUST ONE DAY AFTER A GOVERNMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN HAD DECLARED THE WDC ILLEGAL UNDER POLISH LAW. THE CHURCH HAS SINCE SHOWN AN INCREASING WILLINGNESS TO USE THE PULPIT TO PRESS THE CASE OF THE WORKERS AND, PRESUMABLY, THE DISSIDENTS, IN THE INTEREST OF DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

12. THE COMMITTEE'S PROGRAM. THE WDC'S INITIAL GOAL WAS TO HAVE THE JAILED WORKERS RELEASED. HOWEVER, SUBSEQUENT COMMITTEE STATEMENTS INDICATE A BELIEF THAT THERE IS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1956 THE CHANCE TO FORCE THE REGIME TO GRANT MORE CIVIL LIBERTIES.

13. ACCORDING TO SOME OF THE DISSIDENTS, THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS MIGHT MAKE SUCH PRESSURE SUCCESSFUL:

(A)--THE POLISH PARTY HAS BEEN BADLY SHAKEN BY THE RIOTS, AND THE LEADERSHIP IS UNCERTAIN OF HOW TO DEAL WITH THE RESULTING SITUATION;

(B)--THE VARIOUS DISSIDENT GROUPS (WORKERS, INTELLECTUALS, STUDENTS, PEASANTS, AND THE CHURCH) SHARE A SOLIDARITY THAT WAS MISSING IN THE CRISES OF 1968 AND 1970;

(C)--THE GENERAL MOOD OF THE POPULATION IS ONE OF SULLEN IRRITATION AND IT IS RENDERED MORE DANGEROUS BECAUSE
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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STRIKE WEAPON WAS PROVED; AND

(C)--ALL PARTIES INVOLVED (THE REGIME, THE POPULATION, THE DISSIDENTS, AND THE SOVIET UNION) ARE IN TACIT AGREEMENT THAT A REPETITION OF THE JUNE RIOTS AND THE EVERPRESENT DANGER OF SOVIET INTERVENTION MUST BE AVOIDED.

14. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE DISSIDENTS BELIEVE THAT IF POPULAR PRESSURE IS MAINTAINED (PARTICULARLY FROM THE WORKERS, THE INTELLECTUALS, AND THE CHURCH), CONCESSIONS CAN BE OBTAINED. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE MOVEMENT RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO KEEP DEMANDS WITHIN LIMITS WHICH THEY HOPE (PERHAPS NAIVELY) THAT THE PARTY AND THE SOVIETS

COULD ACCEPT AS NECESSARY EVILS. AMONG THE CONCESSIONS SOUGHT ARE:

(A)--THE LEGAL RIGHT TO STRIKE;

(B)--THE RIGHT OF WORKERS FREELY TO ELECT THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AT THE FACTORY LEVEL;

(C)--CENSORSHIP LAWS THAT WOULD PROVIDE WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS WITH THE RIGHT OF APPEAL TO HIGHER AUTHORITY AND THE COMPLETE ABOLITION OF CENSORSHIP OF SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE AND SMALL-CIRCULATION PUBLICATIONS;

(D)--PROVISION FOR THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC TO REVEAL THE FULL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE JUNE RIOTS;

(E)--GENERAL AMNESTY FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN THE RIOTS; AND

(F)--ABOLITION OF THE RECENTLY INTEGRATED YOUTH ORGANIZATION AND PERMISSION FOR YOUTH TO FORM SPONTANEOUS DISCUSSION CLUBS AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR PLURALITY IN POLITICAL LIFE.

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15. REGIME STEPS UP HARASSMENT. FRUSTRATED THAT ITS INITIAL POLICY OF STUDIED SILENCE AND ITS SUBSEQUENT RELEASE OF JAILED WORKERS HAD NOT CAUSED THE DISSIDENCE TO SUBSIDE, THE REGIME MADE A HEAD-ON ATTACK ON DECEMBER 13. A MAJOR ARTICLE IN THE PARTY DAILY TRYBUNA LUDU CALLED THE WDC THE PRINCIPAL VOICE AMONG ANTI-POLISH FORCES AT HOME AND ABROAD. THIS ACTION FOLLOWED AN EARLIER STATEMENT TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS BY A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN THAT THE WDC'S ACTIVITIES WERE ILLEGAL AND THAT "OUR PATIENCE IS NOT EVERLASTING." ALTHOUGH THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE WDC WOULD BE FOUGHT ON THE "IDEOLOGICAL FRONT," THERE HAS CONTINUED TO BE DIRECT HARASSMENT INCLUDING:

(A)--LENGTHY POLICE INTERROGATIONS OF WDC MEMBERS;

(B)--THREATS OF CALL-UP FOR MILITARY SERVICE;

(C)--LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT AND BAN ON PUBLICATION OF LITERARY WORKS;

(D)--SEARCHES OF HOMES OF WDC MEMBERS AND CONFISCATION OF LITERATURE ALLEGEDLY CONTAINING EVIDENCE OF POLICE BRUTALITY; AND

(E)--RELEASE OF SEVERAL FAKE "COMMUNIQUES" INTENDED TO SOW DISTRUST AMONG MEMBERS.

16. IN A FURTHER ESCALATION OF PRESSURE, A WDC MEMBER DETAILED TO SERVE AS OBSERVER AT THE DECEMBER 30 RETRIAL OF SOME OF THE WORKERS WAS REPEATEDLY BEATEN UP AND PREVENTED FROM ATTENDING THE TRIAL. THE POLISH PRESS ALSO STEPPED UP ITS ATTACKS BY ACCUSING THE DISSIDENTS OF FOMENTING DISCONTENT AND ATTEMPTING TO SIDETRACK POLAND "FROM THE ROAD OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT" TO "THE EPOCH OF BITTER CLASS WAR." THEIR POLITICAL PROGRAM WAS CHARACTERIZED AS A "MONSTROUS HODGE-PODGE" OF POLITICAL IDEAS, CONFIDENTIAL

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INCLUDING, OMINOUSLY, "UTOPIA, TROTSKYISM...AND A BIT OF ZIONISM."

17. WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE FEARED. IN EARLY JANUARY A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE PARTY'S SECRETARIAT CLAIMED THAT A CRITICAL WESTERN PRESS COULD FURTHER EXACERBATE THE TOUCHY DOMESTIC SITUATION. HE FRANKLY CONCEDED THAT THERE WAS WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION AMONG INTELLECTUALS, WORKERS, FARMERS, AND EVEN PARTY MEMBERS. HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEGATIVE IMPRESSION OF LIFE IN POLAND GIVEN BY WESTERN PRESS REPORTS OF DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES WAS MORE IMPORTANT. THIS CONCERN ABOUT POLAND'S IMAGE IN THE WEST PROBABLY REFLECTS THE REGIME'S FEAR OF BEING SADDLED WITH THE CONTENTIOUS DISSIDENT ISSUE AT THE CSCE FOLLOW-UP MEETING IN BELGRADE. THERE MUST ALSO BE FEAR OF AN AREA-WIDE MOVEMENT CONNECTED WITH DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES IN EAST GERMANY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

18. CONCLUSION. THE POLISH LEADERSHIP, UNABLE TO SILENCE ITS CRITICS BY PIECEMEAL MEASURES AND UNWILLING TO RUN THE RISKS OF FULL-SCALE SUPPRESSION, HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO MAINTAIN ITS POLICY OF ATTRITION IN DEALING WITH THE WDC AND THE OTHER DISSIDENTS AND TO RESORT TO HARSHER MEASURES ONLY WHEN FORCED. IT MUST HOPE THAT TIME AND AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WILL STRENGTHEN ITS HAND AND CAUSE THE CURRENT ISSUES TO FADE AWAY.
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